

4/25/2005 This Week in Congress

This Week in Congress

April 25, 2005

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find it useful.

House Passes Legislation to Better Meet Country's Energy Needs

This week, the House passed energy legislation aimed at lowering the costs of fuel for cars, homes and businesses and reducing the country's dependence on foreign oil. This comprehensive legislation, H.R. 6, the Energy Policy Act of 2005, is similar to legislation that was twice passed by the House but never received approval by the U.S. Senate.

Meeting our nation's energy needs includes better controlling fuel prices and having a reliable and clean energy supply. If our country wants to remain competitive in a global market, we must have electricity and other energy sources priced at levels that allow us to compete.

The House-passed energy legislation includes incentives for more domestic oil production, as well as tools that help promote renewable fuels, such as ethanol, biodiesel and wind energy. Included in the legislation is a renewable fuels requirement to add five billion gallons per year of ethanol and other renewable-based fuel to the nation's fuel supply. Renewable energy sources are a growing part of the Kansas agriculture and statewide economy, and are also cleaner burning fuels, making them friendlier to the environment.

The legislation also contains a provision that would lengthen Daylight Savings Time by two months. Lengthening the amount of time that Americans work during sunlight hours would reduce oil consumption by an estimated 10,000 barrels a day during the extra months. In addition, the legislation promotes investment in the country's electric transmission capacity, reducing the danger of blackouts and increasing access to wind energy and other renewable energy sources. Other provisions call for additional use of solar energy as well as incentives for hybrid cars and hydrogen use.

The price of oil and gas affects everyone in Kansas, from the single-family home in Johnson County to the farming operation in Johnson City. This legislation is a responsible way to help bring good things to our state: more jobs, cheaper fuel, lower energy costs and additional markets for Kansas products. I hope that the House and Senate can reach an agreement and move forward to provide these important benefits for Kansans.

Update on the War on Terrorism in Iraq, Afghanistan

On Wednesday, I joined my colleagues in meeting with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Meyers to discuss the latest on the War on Terrorism. It has been two years since we witnessed the Iraqi people tearing down statues of Saddam Hussein in the streets of Baghdad and over three years since the Taliban was overthrown in Afghanistan. Secretary Rumsfeld and Chairman Meyers reported on the progress being made.

The U.S. currently has 144,000 troops in Iraq and 18,000 deployed in Afghanistan. Following a successful election, Iraq's National Assembly recently chose the country's first democratically elected president in more than 50 years. Iraqi security forces now number over 150,000, and are beginning to take over many of the duties previously handled by coalition forces. In Afghanistan, in addition to performing their security duties, U.S. forces are busy rebuilding the country, helping to put schools, hospitals, and other institutions back on their feet. Attacks on coalition forces in Afghanistan have fallen by over half in the past year. With the war waging on, Secretary Rumsfeld reported that overall recruitment numbers for the U.S. armed forces are stable.

While much progress is being made, many challenges remain for our troops, who are risking their lives daily. It is important to keep them and their families in our thoughts and prayers.

Awarding Young Kansas Artists in the Congressional Arts Competition

On Friday evening, I presented awards to high school artists in the 2005 First District Congressional Arts Competition. All high school students in the First Congressional District were eligible for the competition.

Jordan Zerr of Wheatland received best of show. His artwork, entitled "Lunch at Harvest" will be displayed in the U.S. Capitol, and Jordan will be invited to attend awards ceremonies in Washington, D.C. later this year. Second place went to Ben Patton of Salina. Additionally, merit awards were presented to several outstanding works. Receiving these awards were Desirae Johnson and Jessie Sauer of Little River, Jenna Neaderhiser and Cory Traugott of Lindsborg, Rebecca Woodall of Wheatland, Mindy Strecker, of Solomon and Brandi Stegman of Great Bend.

Congratulations to the winners and all the artists who took part in this year's competition. I thank St. John's Military School in Salina, hosts of the 2005 competition, and the judge of the competition, Brad Anderson, Chair of the Art Department at Kansas Wesleyan University.

Meeting With Kansans on Big First Listening Tour

This week, I was able to meet with many Kansans as part of the Big First Listening Tour. This year's tour started on Monday with stops in Cottonwood Falls, in Chase County; Madison, in Greenwood County; Reading, in Lyon County; and Harveyville, in Wabaunsee County. On Friday, I visited Seneca, in Nemaha County; Marysville, in Marshall County; Barnes in Washington County; and Concordia in Cloud County.

This is my ninth annual tour, stopping in all 69 counties of the First Congressional District. In addition, this year's tour will emphasize the importance of small town tourism with many of the stops planned at historical and tourist sites. My hope is that "Rediscovering Kansas" will help build awareness of Kansas tourism sites throughout the First District.

For a full list of the times and dates of when I'll be in your county, visit my website here: http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/ks01_moran/041105TheTour.html

In the Office

Several Kansans were in my office this week, representing the Kansas State University Extension program. Richard Fechter of Howard, Jodi Besthorn of Wichita, Glenda Keller of Washington, Trudy Rice of Lawrence, Ray Flickner of Wichita, Kent Ochsner of Tribune, Bob and Sondra Tolle of McPherson, Doug Wolters of Atwood and Daryl Bucholz of Manhattan were in to talk about the many programs and services their extension office provides. Also in from KSU was Fred Cholick, Dean of the KSU College of Agriculture. Issues affecting Kansas Emergency Medical Services (EMS) were discussed this week in a meeting with the Administrator's Society of the Kansas EMS Association. In to talk about reimbursements and grant funding opportunities for EMS were Chris Way of Parsons, John Hultgren, of Abilene, Kerry McCue of Hays and Terry David of Lyons. Dan Baffa, Director of Lee Richardson Zoo in Garden City, was in to discuss aquarium issues.

Representatives from the Kansas Association of Insurance Agents and from the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors were in to discuss their respective legislative priorities. Kansas agents in the office included Scott Stuckey of Junction City, Dan Deener of Arkansas City, Don Morris of Paola, Dale Chaffin of Hays, Daniel Magill of Topeka, Cindy Hower of Holton, Phil Dressen of Wichita, Al Shank of Liberal and Larry Magill of Topeka. In from the latter group were Paul Dahlke of Wichita, James Waters of Wamego and Sandy Braden of Topeka, Executive Director of the Kansas Association. Elmer Ronnebaum of Seneca and Dennis Schwartz of Topeka were in representing the Kansas Rural Water Association. They were in to talk about the funding of water and wastewater construction projects. In to talk about livestock issues were Larry Kendig of Osborne and Doran Juneck of Cuba, representing the Kansas Cattlemen's Association. In to discuss Title VII grants for health professionals and Medicare physician reimbursements were Dr. Rick Kellerman of the University of Kansas Medical Center in Wichita, and Dr. Joe Davison of West Wichita Family Physicians.

In the office this week for a tour of the Capitol building were Dale and Sherry Chaffin of Hays, Daniel Magill of Topeka, Don and Vicki Morris of Paola, Dan and Lynn Deener of Arkansas City and David and Sherry Hubbard of Junction City.

Very truly yours,

Jerry